Québec Youth Policy

Bringing youth into Québec's mainstream

Québec

103-02070/

This version is an English translation of the Québec youth policy
La jeunesse au cœur du Québec, an original French language publication.

This document was produced by the Secrétariat à la jeunesse.
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Message from the Prime Minister

It is with an immense pride that the Government of Québec unveils its first ever youth policy. This policy is meant to be an effective tool in promoting the conditions to enable Québec's young people to exercise full and complete citizenship.

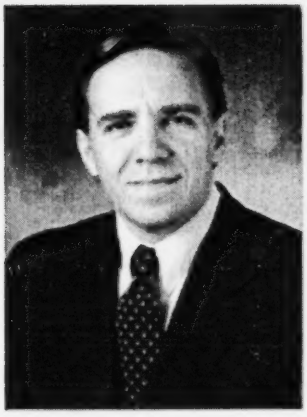
No community can prosper as a vibrant and just society without the participation of its young people. This is why we are providing them with the means to influence our future and build our nation.

Energetic and inventive, young people are a source of inspiration for all of us. The challenges they are called to face are many; just think about globalization, endless technological advances, demographic trends and major social changes. These transformations require concerted efforts and creativity. Like all citizens of Québec, young people must play their part in developing our society and making it thrive. They deserve our support!

Together, we can foster a culture of generational renewal and a sense of belonging. We can also coordinate the initiatives of all partners to ensure coherent action in youth-related matters. This policy will enable us to meet major collective challenges and help forge this essential solidarity between the generations.

Bernard Landry
Prime Minister of Québec

Message from the Minister



At the Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse (youth summit), in February 2000, all of the partners agreed on the need to give Québec its own youth policy. This commitment was included in the final consensus.

In July 2000, as Minister of State for Education and Youth, I released a draft proposal, "Setting the Stage for a Québec Youth Policy." This proposal was prepared with the help of an advisory committee made up of youth group representatives. It went through an extensive public consultation process, which called upon the participation of groups representing Québec as a whole and each region, and the support of the regional youth forums. In the fall, we drew upon the opinions and proposals from this public consultation and from all government departments and agencies to prepare a draft Québec youth policy.

This youth policy is the outcome of a broad-based rethinking, which above all sought to bring young people into the process. All of the partners, however, have enriched this policy throughout its entire development.

It will be a frame of reference for the actions of both the government and the partners in coming years. It sets out four main policy orientations to provide young people with conditions that are conducive to active citizenship: engaging society in a culture of generational renewal, ensuring young people achieve their full potential, facilitating access to the job market and improving the quality of working life and, finally, developing a sense of belonging to Québec society, wherein each young person must be able to find complete self-fulfilment. Young people also need to find their place in Québec's mainstream—its projects, its institutions, its evolution and its influence abroad. This means a lasting change in mentalities towards young people and recognition of their values.

The youth policy is intended for all young people and will enable them, starting today, to build the Québec of tomorrow. It is truly a project for all of society because our future depends on it. Its success will depend on the willingness of us all to place young people at the heart of Québec society.

François Legault
Minister of State for Education and Youth

PREAMBLE

Whereas a mutually supportive society must assume its responsibilities toward current and future generations;

Whereas a democratic, fair society encourages its citizens to participate fully and entirely, regardless of their age, gender, origin or living conditions;

Whereas a responsible society guarantees equal opportunity and fights against social, cultural, and economic exclusion of its citizens;

Whereas it is important to rise to the challenge of including the values and aspirations of young people in the society of today and tomorrow;

Whereas it is important to ensure the continuity of Québec's human, social and material progress in a changing world;

Whereas all young people must be able to benefit from conditions conducive to achieving their full potential;

Whereas it is important for Québec to become more open to the world and take its place among nations that can influence major world trends;

Whereas young people are central to the renewal of our social and cultural dynamics through their creativity and their ability to be in touch with new cultural trends;

Whereas it was the consensus at the Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse that there is a need to ensure consistent youth-oriented action by the government and to enrich Québec with a youth policy that has a long-term vision.

Consequently, the Québec youth policy aims to encourage active citizenship for all young people in Québec and invites society as a whole to:

- Inject a genuine culture of generational renewal into the activities and workings of Québec society and consolidate bonds of solidarity between the generations;
- Ensure development of the full potential of all Québec's young people, whatever their social, economic, or cultural realities, their area of residence, their degree of independence, their gender or their sexual orientation;
- Define strategies to deal with certain specific realities experienced by young people, recognize the different forms of social participation of young people in their communities, and ensure equitable living conditions;
- Ensure the full, complete participation of young people in the renewal of Québec society, particularly by integrating them harmoniously into the job market and through the quality of their working life;
- Enable young people to reconcile their personal and collective identities in a society that accepts the diversity of young people;
- Enable young people to become more open to the world and help spread universal values that Québec society subscribes to, such as solidarity, democracy, and human rights;
- Introduce a lasting youth vision into government action and the action of all partners, with due respect for Québec's regional and cultural characteristics.

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Introduction

Québec has to act if young people are to have a future and participate fully in society. Their dreams and hopes need support. They must be given the capacity to influence the present and shape both their future and Québec's.

The Québec youth policy invites all of Québec to mobilize behind this call to empower young people to use their full potential. If Québec succeeds in better integrating its young people, society as a whole will enter the future with confidence—its continued prosperity and progress assured.

The Québec Youth Policy

A major step in the development of public policy for young people

The government's fundamental mission is to defend the public interest and ensure that the development of society is, in fact, consistent with this public interest. It has to adapt its role to the changing social, economic and cultural context.

In recent years, the Québec government has worked hard to redesign its services and put its public finances on a sound footing for current and future generations. Its services to the population have been modernized and overhauled, giving rise to reforms in all areas. Several recent reforms and policies have laid much of the groundwork for the complete, full-fledged participation of young people in society:

- a **family policy** better suited to the realities of young families;
- the **health and welfare policy**, the **reform of health care and social services** and the ensuing major policy orientations for dealing with young people in distress, for preventing suicide and drug addiction, and for promoting health;
- the **education reform**, *A New Direction for Success*—from access for the greatest number to success for the greatest number;
- the **Québec information highway policy**—prepares the young generation for the universe of new technologies and encourages Québec to become more open to the world;
- the **Québec science and innovation policy**—has several youth-oriented dimensions, including youth education;
- the **Action Plan 2000-2003**, *Equality for all Women of Québec*—includes mobilizing projects and sector-specific actions to equalize living and working conditions between girls and boys;
- the **Québec policy on universities**, *Priorities for Our Future*—highlights the importance that the government attaches to universities and to their essential role in developing people and society.

The government has also been sensitive to the aspirations of young people. In 1987, the Conseil permanent de la jeunesse was created at the request of young people—on the occasion of the 1983 Sommet québécois de la jeunesse—who wished to have a permanent independent body to speak up for their interests within the government. The Secrétariat à la jeunesse was created in 1983 and became a permanent structure in 1988 with mandates to provide research and analysis, coordination, and advice to government departments and agencies on youth issues. The *Québec Government Action Plan for Youth 1998-2001* proposed ways to bring young people into new areas of participation and joint action.

The Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse, held in February 2000, stressed the need to go beyond a piecemeal approach and give Québec a youth policy. The partners agreed that such a policy would take a comprehensive, integrated approach and would guide all youth-oriented actions while promoting changes to mentalities and behaviours.

In actions aimed at young people, the federal government administers its own youth programs, which to varying degrees cohabit with Québec's. In certain cases, agreements between the federal and Québec governments have led to the creation of joint programs. Overlapping, though, is visible in other areas, notably in employment, education, and health care. The Québec youth policy is an opportunity to ensure that Québec maintains a consistent position on young people, thus bolstering the Québec government's scope for initiative and reaffirming its priorities when acting on youth issues.

A frame of reference

The Québec youth policy must be pivotal to action for upcoming generations. The government is inviting all of Québec society to share a common vision: active citizenship for all young people.

The Québec youth policy is not a substitute for policies that exist already or are being prepared in government departments. Its policy orientations are to be likened not to measures or actions but rather to courses to be taken for reaching a central objective of enabling all young people to find self-fulfilment and be active, involved citizens in Québec society. The policy is a frame of reference for the action plan that will determine how it will be implemented. The action plan, updated every three years, will bring the strategies in line with the changing situation of Québec's young people. It will be implemented with due respect for Québec's specific regional and cultural characteristics.

Two key approaches will ensure that all actions converge on a common goal. A collective approach will foster changes in mentalities and behaviours with a view to bringing young people into the development of Québec society on a lasting basis. An approach aimed essentially at the individual will enable each young person to achieve his or her full potential.

Four major policy orientations will ensure coherent youth-oriented measures:

- Engaging society in a culture of generational renewal;
- Ensuring young people achieve their full potential;

- Facilitating access to the job market and improving the quality of working life;
- Developing a sense of belonging.

The Québec youth policy is mainly aimed at 15-29 year olds, but also addresses issues that concern young people outside this age group. It includes 12-14 year olds when the issues concern adolescents, so as to encompass the period of adolescence more comprehensively. The policy extends to 30-35 year olds for other issues, namely measures dealing with the civil service, work and young families.

The government is for a mutually supportive society but is not the only player

It is not solely up to the government to help young people achieve their full potential. The challenges of young people are beyond the scope of the government acting alone and require the involvement of all partners. Some partners already have a major impact on young people. Schools, municipalities, and community-based organizations, among others, deal with them on a daily basis and have several means for improving their quality of life and community participation.

In the current context, all players must define their responsibilities in youth-oriented solutions and strategies. Québec as a whole must fully embrace the aspirations of young people and opt for a defining vision of future society: a generation of strong and committed youth.

BACKGROUND TO THE QUÉBEC YOUTH POLICY

The social, economic and cultural changes under way have shaken all societies to their foundations. In this context, the conditions under which young people participate in Québec society are being redefined as well.

The period of youth is especially sensitive to the current situation. Some have even gone so far as to call young people "barometers of change."[1] Their situation is strongly affected by the changes in progress and the consequences of such changes. In this regard, we can single out five main components of social change. By studying them, it is easier to understand the current situation of Québec and of young people and better grasp the urgency of defining the place of young people in Québec society. The main components are: demographics, development within regions, the family and young people, globalization and, finally, work.

Demographic trends

Recent studies show that Québec will be among the societies most severely affected by the aging of its population. The time has come to look into the consequences of an aging and, in general, slower growing population. Falling birth rates, higher life expectancy, and low net in-migration are major trends that

1. Madeleine Gauthier, "Introduction : Être jeune en l'an 2000," in Observatoire jeunes et société, *Être jeune en l'an 2000*, Québec City, Les Éditions de l'IQRC, 2000, p. 77.

will last for several more decades. Between 1981 and 1998, the proportion of 15-29 year olds fell from 29% to 20%. According to forecasts, it will be between 15% and 17% in 2041.[2]

These demographic trends will make it increasingly harder for young people to voice their concerns or priorities when decisions are being made, and to affect the course of society as a whole. For example, the average age of voters was 41 in 1971 and 45 in 1996. It will be around 54 in 2041.

Québec society is bound to become more diverse. Cultures that are long established and others from all parts of the world are already cohabiting within our society. Meanwhile, the cultural differences between the Montréal area—which takes in most immigrants—and the other regions of Québec are likely to increase. This situation is testing the capacity of developing a sense of belonging within Québec society. As well, Aboriginal communities are present in almost all regions of Québec and some of their young people are grappling with especially difficult social problems.

What is at stake is the long-term vitality of Québec society, its adaptability to emerging values, in particular those held by young people, and its capacity to maintain and renew its dynamic outlook in all its regions. Its capacity to remain an original and prosperous society also hinges on this.

Concentration of development

In addition to these ongoing general demographic trends, we are also seeing population declines in some regions and an increasing concentration in the Montréal area. More and more, young people are required to move away to pursue their education or to go to work. Together with falling birth rates, the exodus of young people is having a direct impact on the social dynamics of some areas.

Changing patterns in markets, activities and employment have made the economy of some regions more fragile while having a positive effect on others. This situation has a bearing both on young people who leave their home region and hope to go back and on those who stay behind. Young people have a direct stake in the development and future prospects of their living environment.

The changing family and young people

The family has gone through major transformations over the last few decades. The continually declining fertility of Québec women, the tendency of both spouses to work in most Québec families, the instability of marriages, the increase in the number of single-parent and blended families, and the rise in life expectancy have shattered the traditional family model. Today's families have to face new social and economic challenges. Young people, especially teenagers, thus enjoy less stability in the social and family environments that traditionally used to socialize them.

2. Data from the Institut de la statistique du Québec.

The period of youth—meaning the series of transitions that lead to full adulthood—is tending to last longer and longer. Life paths are no longer linear and are increasingly characterized by a back-and-forth movement between education, the job market, apartment living—alone, as a couple, or with other tenants—and the family home. This trend is being accentuated by the longer time spent at school and the problems getting established in working life, both of which are related to the changing job market.

The characteristics associated with "young people" and "adults" are increasingly interchangeable. Young people are working and adults are going back to school. Teenagers, especially through early sexual relations or through their consumer habits, are also adopting behaviours that were traditionally associated with adulthood. At a young age, they are called upon to make decisions that will strongly affect the course of their life, for example the choices they make as early as high school about their educational and career path.

Young people do not form a homogeneous group, no more than any other generations have. They have many diverse and non-exclusive affiliations. Their development takes different forms, depending on their personality, their origin, their family status, their socioeconomic background, and so forth. These differences are a source of richness for Québec society, but the exclusion that sometimes results from these differences may impede the development of certain young people with specific integration problems. As well, boys and girls are affected differently by the situations that young people face. It is therefore vital to provide services that meet the needs of both boys and girls.

Globalization

Globalization is a phenomenon that increasingly goes beyond the integration of national economies and is having impacts on political and social systems, as well as on the culture and identity of peoples. One of the main challenges for Québec is to ensure, from a standpoint of sustainable development, that its citizens grow and develop within an open, dynamic economy, based on advanced skills and technologies, and a society characterized by a high level of social and cultural cohesion. Québec is already a dynamic part of the movement toward globalization. It is in a position to join the nations that will influence this movement through its creativity, its cultural originality and its social and democratic values.

Globalization tests the capacity of people and communities to adapt to and take advantage of rapid changes, to understand the world, and to find a place in it individually and collectively. Many people, particularly the young, are concerned about the consequences of globalization. These fears are voiced in several areas: preservation of existing social programs and benefits; social cohesion and solidarity; homogenization of cultures; impacts of environmental degradation on their quality of life and on that of upcoming generations; and the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

The changing job market

In modern societies, work not only provides financial independence but also serves many purposes in the lives of individuals: self-fulfilment, social recognition and advancement, shaping of social identity, support for starting a family, etc.

Under the impact of changes occurring worldwide, young working people are now faced with conditions totally different from those of the last thirty years. Since the mid-1970s, the job market has been characterized by a decline in full-time salaried employment, for instance standard employment, and a growth in non-standard forms of employment, for instance part-time work, temporary work and self-employment. This change in the kind of work accessible to young people is directly affecting the working conditions they can aspire to. As well, social programs and labour laws do not always make allowance for these new forms of work.

Challenges for active youth citizenship

The Québec youth policy aims to create conditions for young people to become active, involved citizens in Québec society. The notion of active citizenship not only directly refers to the full, complete participation of citizens in the life of a society and their commitment to it, but also to their capability to do so.

Citizenship develops progressively through different experiences within the family, at school, during leisure time and at work, for instance. Citizenship concerns not only the rights and duties of individuals, but also the social, cultural and economic conditions that encourage the full participation of individuals in their community.

Today, the traditional support frameworks, and the conditions for the participation of young people in society, are themselves being redefined. Society must be able to echo the ways of life and aspirations of young people. The notion of citizenship will need to comprise values that foster the civic and social involvement of young people. Citizenship is the opposite of exclusion. It is linked to the promotion of a mutually supportive, inclusive and equitable society.

Making society more mutually supportive

Young people contribute to the vitality and renewal of Québec society. They are essential to its development. From a standpoint of sustainable development, it is important not to compromise the capacity of future generations to meet their needs. To care today about the place of young people and their heritage is a matter of being responsible for a vibrant Québec society. One of the challenges will be to truly include young people's aspirations so they become active, responsible partners in today's society and tomorrow's—when changing demographics will tend to give more weight to the more immediate interests of older people.

Strengthening intergenerational solidarity and developing a true culture of generational renewal are fundamental issues. Québec society must recognize the importance of concrete action so as to share the social, cultural, economic and environmental values of the different generations living throughout Québec. This sharing of values and this firm commitment to opening doors to young people in

all areas of community life will give them a stake in the development of their respective living environments and society as a whole, this being an essential condition for developing their sense of belonging.

Ensuring young people achieve their full potential

Young people must each be able to develop their full potential, their personal identity and their capability to take an active place in society. This also means becoming independent and responsible for their situation and their future. Concretely, individuals must be given the opportunity to fully exercise their citizenship.

Education is more than ever a deciding factor in each individual's future and in society's. After the family, school is one of the first living environments of young people. It prepares them for citizenship by enabling them to acquire knowledge and skills and by exposing them to culture. The objective of training 100% of young people according to their potential is a major challenge.[3] The aim is to give each young person the tools needed to become an active and responsible citizen.

A mutually supportive society cares about offering each young person an equal chance to develop and become independent. It must be recognized that poverty, especially, has a direct bearing on the physical and psychological health of young people, on their social integration and on their choosing to stay in school. One of the challenges is to support young people in their diversity, recognize the different forms of social participation they develop in their respective living environments, and ensure equitable living conditions. It is also important to be attentive and open to the different forms that families may assume today and adapt services to young families accordingly.

Through work, the exercise of citizenship finds one of its most concrete forms of expression. The persisting lack of job security faced by younger generations constitutes a challenge for society. Young people need to have access to steady and decent jobs that meet their expectations and qualifications. Openness to the next generation and intergenerational solidarity in the job market are measures of a society's success in terms of balanced and dynamic development. Young people also need the conditions to achieve their full potential in the job market.

In response to the different social, economic, and cultural changes it is going through, Québec society must give itself the means to meet all new challenges. To do so, Québec will have to guide its development, send out clear messages, and acquire concrete means so that young people can, starting today, participate fully in the development of their society.

3. Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse, working group report "Perfecting Knowledge and Training," Quebec City, December 1999.

The Québec Youth Policy Orientations and Lines of action

PRESENTATION

The concern for equal opportunity that has characterized Québec society since the Quiet Revolution is especially important in today's context. No effort should be spared in the quest for innovative responses adapted to the needs and expectations of young people. Furthermore, to ensure their lasting, full-fledged participation in Québec's social, economic and cultural development, changes will have to be made to attitudes and mentalities.

Four policy orientations will guide the actions required to meet the challenges of active youth citizenship. They address the place of young people in society and the possibility for each young person of achieving his or her full potential:

- **Engaging society in a culture of generational renewal**, to ensure the advancement and vitality of Québec society in a mutually supportive fashion, and to enable young people to start contributing to it now;
- **Ensuring young people achieve their full potential**, so that all will benefit from conditions that are conducive to their development;
- **Facilitating access to the job market and improving the quality of working life**, so that each young person can fulfill himself or herself at work and fully participate in the renewal of Québec society;
- **Developing a sense of belonging**, so that young people will develop fully in their life environment and help make it more open to the world and to cultural diversity.

The Québec youth policy is a frame of reference for all actions relating to adolescents and young adults. All young people are included in the policy, regardless of where they live, their ethnic or cultural origin, degree of functional independence, socioeconomic status, gender, or sexual orientation. However, beyond the general policy orientations, situations requiring special strategies are indicated. Implementing this policy will require much flexibility so as to cope with these different situations and adapt to the various realities that young people experience at a local, regional and national level.

These policy orientations are supported by lines of action and strategies for the active citizenship of all Québec young people. Some issues will require action on several fronts because of their importance to the community. This is notably the case with the family and education.

The strategies differ in kind and scope. In some cases, the strategies pursued rest on extensive documentation. In other cases, further development is needed. The action plan will determine the respective actions and responsibilities of the partners and the government.

First Orientation:
Engaging society in a culture of generational renewal

In order to ensure a dynamic future for Québec, we have to think about the place of young people in today's society, and continue to make improvements in every field: health, education, culture, economy, environment and science. Québec needs to recognize the fundamental role of young people in the development of its society, and commit itself to the upcoming generation.

The desire to fully involve young people must change the way institutions and individuals behave towards them. Québec needs to thoroughly embrace the aspirations, vitality and creativity of its youth and encourage them to participate fully and completely in society.

A society that commits itself to a culture of generational renewal will be one that is open to diversity and new ideas. It will also take to heart the ongoing improvement of its citizens' living conditions. A real culture of generational renewal can only be achieved if everyone involved is determined to allow young people their own place in all sectors of activity. Choices must be made now in order for young citizens to become active partners in the development of Québec's present and future.

To engage society in this culture of generational renewal, concerted strategies are essential and must be based on actions taken along the following seven lines of action: education and training, generations with joint responsibility, sustainable development, the place of young people in circles of influence and decision making, planning of the workforce, culture, creativity and innovation, and a new generation of scientists.

Line of action 1: Education and training – a collective priority

Education and training play a fundamental role in young people's development and, to a great extent, are the key to their full participation in society. For these reasons, they also play a leading role in the social, cultural and economic development of Québec. Preparing young people to integrate and participate in building a society of their own making should be considered as an investment that will ensure this society's vitality and renewal.

Québec must continue to place education high in its priorities, and continually work toward improving what it has already undertaken. Educating young people and providing them with social and working skills is the main objective. Every young person must have access to training which will enable them to participate in the development of the community according to their potential. This means universal access to quality training, at all levels of education, taking into account both where people live and financial considerations. However, it is necessary to go even further. All those involved, whether employers, communities or families, should contribute, in their own area and in their own way, to the training of young people. The support and expertise of organizations working with young people should also be fully exploited.

To make education a collective priority, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Ensure access to a good basic education, in continuity with current reforms, for all young people, thus providing them with the means to develop to their full potential;
- Promote investing in education to ensure the economic, social and cultural development of the community;
- Encourage various members of society, in their respective fields of responsibility, to participate in training the upcoming generation, whether this be in basic, professional or technical training, general education at the college level, university education, or continuing education;
- Provide parents with support so that this collective priority is also a priority of families.

To remove barriers to education, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Ensure, through ongoing evaluation, that all financial assistance programs for education are:
  - adapted to the needs of a varied clientele and to the new realities facing them, such as having student loan debts and holding down jobs;
  - consistent with and complementary to the various assistance programs set up for young people;
- Maintain accessibility to education regardless of where people live or their financial status;
- Provide access to a greater diversity of training programs in the various levels of education to young people living in outlying regions, notably by means of new pedagogical tools and technical equipment.

Line of action 2: Generations with joint responsibility

Every generation is responsible for passing on equal or better living conditions and social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits to upcoming generations. In ever-evolving times, the conditions which dictate citizens' involvement in society are also changing. Certain social or economic factors can affect the capacity of young people to engage themselves fully in society, and thus become obstacles to the establishment of solid relationships within the same generation, or among the generations.

A culture of generational renewal must bring about responses that are adaptable to changing circumstances. It should be expressed through a greater curiosity, and a greater openness to the experiences of different groups and generations. The long-term vitality of Québec society is directly linked to the efforts that will be made to engaging all the population in a true culture of generational renewal and strengthening their sense of solidarity. This is why it is essential to turn to young people and take their concerns, needs and expectations into consideration.

To reinforce sound relationships between generations, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Include the notion of solidarity and fairness among the generations in governmental policies, budgetary priorities, and tax measures designed to help young people maintain and improve their living conditions;
- Support action promoting the establishment of links between different age groups and different communities, such as mentoring, pairing or guidance.

Line of action 3: Sustainable development – a key component

Sustainable development is defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[4] This concept encompasses the social, economic and cultural dimensions as much as the environmental dimension of the development of society. It entails responsibility and the passing on of knowledge between generations–each person, through their daily actions, has a certain responsibility toward the future.

In this perspective, a commitment to generational renewal, with coherent action from all partners involved, aims to ensure a change in behaviour, namely in the provision of goods and services and in consumer habits, with a view to an increased respect for the environment and a greater concern for worldwide harmony. Schools are an ideal setting in which to make young people aware of the importance of protecting the environment and knowing the stakes involved.

To integrate sustainable development practices, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Motivate those who are active in society to integrate the principles of sustainable development into their planning, operations, production and follow up;
- Support young people in their individual and collective initiatives to create economic, social and cultural activities relating to sustainable development;
- Develop tools and carry out awareness, training and mobilization programs adapted to different societal groups so as to educate them about the principles of sustainable development when it comes to protecting the environment and natural resources;
- Support the integration of environment-related education into school life.

Line of action 4: The place of young people in circles of influence and decision making

For circles of influence and decision making to be representative of society, they must call upon the contribution and presence of young people. This will ensure that further consideration will be given to the choices, needs and priorities of

4. World Commission on the Environment and Development, *Bruntland Report*, 1987.

young people as they will have taken part in the process. The real, concrete integration of young people, however, lies in the openness and support shown by the people already in place.

Young people are already very active within well-established community-based organizations. They also participate actively in debates which have a direct impact on them. Whenever possible, areas where young people are likely to express themselves should be involved. The participation of young people in decision making must take place early on in life, through student councils, for instance. Teenagers, who are at a period of their lives where experience plays a key role, have limited access to debates since, while no longer considered children, they have not yet reached adulthood. These young people, however, have an original point of view to give, and need to be encouraged to participate in debates in the environment in which they live.

To ensure the participation of young people, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Recognize the contribution made by young people to Québec society, and promote a positive image at all times of the strength they represent;
- Allow young people a place in decision-making and concerted-action bodies of the public, private and community sectors, at local, regional and even national levels, namely by giving them the right to vote in these bodies;
- Motivate young people to participate in decision-making bodies by creating, within these bodies, a context which is both open to and supportive of their actions;
- Encourage young people to participate and express themselves as early as adolescence, by setting up associations, gatherings and student councils at the high school level;
- Recognize, support and develop areas and environments in which young people can participate and get together, and make it easier to set up networks in all related fields: community action, culture, education, environment, recreation and sports.

Line of action 5: Planning the workforce and integrating a new generation of workers

All sectors of activity should be able to benefit from the active presence of young people. With the changing job market, planning labour needs involves simultaneous action on several fronts. Retirements, the instability of the job market, the mobility of workers, and emerging new technology make this planning exercise, while necessary, more and more difficult. The problems that regions and employers are facing in trying to recruit a qualified workforce, while a great number of workers–including young newly qualified ones–are looking for work, testify to this difficulty. Consequently, it is important to encourage partners to anticipate their labour needs better and to take a more active role in training the younger generation, particularly in sectors of activity which are essential to outlying regions.

Openness to the upcoming generation must be expressed through concern for the transfer of knowledge and support for continuing education and further training. These are important conditions for young people to be able to enter the job market smoothly and achieve their full potential. Employees in small businesses and workers in non-standard jobs, however, are not able to benefit from continuing education as easily. They must also have access to support adapted to their situation.

The government, for its part, would like to stress the importance of young people in its own personnel and in its efforts to modernize, especially as it needs to be able to continue counting on a competent, dynamic public administration. The government expects its own initiatives in planning and integrating a new generation of workers to act as a catalyst so that all partners in Québec society ensure that young people have no trouble entering the job market.

To ensure planning of the workforce and the integration of a new generation of workers, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Promote the importance of a culture of generational renewal in all sectors of activity;
- Increase research into labour needs and the necessary skills on a local, regional and national scale;
- Urge a greater number of businesses, organizations, municipalities and publicly owned corporations to integrate young people into the planning and renewal of their workforce;
- Urge employers to offer more labour adjustment measures, further training and continuing education to their young workers;
- Allow young self-employed workers and those with other non-standard jobs access to continuing education;
- Promote knowledge transfer and the passing on of expertise and experience by setting up conditions in which experienced workers can be partnered with new workers, and set up phased retirement programs combined with mentoring, pairing and guidance activities;
- Encourage concerted action when developing recruitment strategies involving young people, various partners, institutions, local and regional development agencies, and sector-based committees.

In the context of rejuvenating the civil service and government networks, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Increase efforts concerning the rejuvenation and renewal of the civil service and public services and utilities;
- Urge government departments and agencies to include in their strategic planning of human resources the means they intend to use to guarantee an increased presence of young people in their organizations and the passing on of knowledge.

Line of action 6: Culture, creativity and innovation

Québec's creativity and cultural vitality have been developed in a rather remarkable context, one that is both Francophone and North American. Another contributing factor is the presence of rich and diverse cultures. These characteristics help to strengthen its collective identity and uniqueness. Québec distinguishes itself on the international scene through its original and exciting artistic and cultural output.

To ensure a lasting artistic and cultural heritage, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Involve young people in the development of resources and cultural property;
- Make young people even more aware of the history of former generations and the characteristics of Québec culture which shape their very identity;
- Make young people aware of the original, diverse and dynamic artistic and cultural practices in Québec by providing better access to facilities where all types of art forms are shown.

Cultural realities are constantly in a process of renewal, and the changes are chiefly brought about by young people. It is important therefore to continue to foster this vitality by encouraging the creative work of young artists and the upcoming generation. This work must be supported in all regions of Québec and be promoted and shown both within and outside of Québec.

Québec has also made its mark through its ability to innovate and its creativity in the field of new technology. It is therefore important to pursue initiatives aimed at encouraging further development of Québec products so that designers are able to work in this field, young people may have access to products adapted to their needs, and Québec society may continue to shine on the international scene.

To allow young people to express themselves, develop their creativity and innovate, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Promote creativity among young people, and provide better access to places where they can express themselves creatively;
- Welcome, recognize and support the artistic creations of young people, by showing the creations on a local, national and international scale;
- Support the creativity and artistic expression of young people through school and extracurricular activities to develop their critical judgment and increase their contact with the artistic community;
- Give young people increased access to information and communication technology and provide education-based support measures for this purpose.

Line of action 7: A new generation of scientists

In a knowledge-based society, individuals not only need to possess a lot of *information and an array* of skills, but also to learn to use them together. The current plethora of sources of information does not bear comparison with those of yesterday's society, and a sustained effort is necessary to keep up with the evolution of knowledge. Scientific and intellectual competencies along with the know-how that has been developed to date constitute a heritage which must be passed down so that young people can continue to enrich it and keep it evolving from generation to generation.

The awakening of the love of knowledge must take place early in life, which means acquiring a true scientific mind through the different levels of education and out-of-school activities. To guarantee their integration into a changing world, organizations and businesses must learn to manage change in an optimal way, to encourage the acquisition of knowledge, and to support innovation, research and scientific development.

To ensure a new generation of scientists, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Promote science among young people through stimulating activities and an awareness of scientific knowledge and culture;
- Support scientific understanding and encourage technological and social innovation;
- Ensure that young people have access to scientific training at all levels of education in order to develop their scientific mind, and encourage careers in this area, particularly for young women;
- Support young researchers in fundamental research and innovative projects.

Second Orientation:
Ensuring young people achieve their full potential

Youth is a time to develop one's personality and make important choices for the future. It is also the time when a sense of belonging to a group or community is acquired and strengthened.

Young people today are expected to perform in many areas. They are called upon to acquire knowledge and skills in an ever-changing environment, to develop their sense of initiative and creativity, and to open their minds to the world, other cultures, new realities and so forth. In return, society needs to guarantee them favourable conditions to ensure their full development. All young people, with their talents and aspirations, must be able to take their place in society.

In order for young people to achieve their full potential, many people need to be involved: the young themselves, their parents, schools, local and regional communities, the government, community organizations and others. It is essential to avoid the exclusion of young people on account of particular problems. Everyone must be able to exercise their citizenship according to their potential and their interests.

Any action which is taken to help young people should aim to increase their autonomy, support them, and seek solutions to social and economic inequalities which hinder their development. Strategies pursued must be geared toward the different stages of youth and the diversity of youth.

To ensure that young people achieve their full potential, concerted strategies are essential and must be based on actions taken along the following five lines of action: an equal chance for all young people, support for families, a partnership between schools and communities, development through recreation, sports and volunteer work, and a preventive approach.

Line of action 1: An equal chance for all young people

Poverty is well known to have a direct impact on the physical and psychological health of young people, and therefore on their ability to achieve their full potential. To combat poverty, intervention is required before the onset of problems, meaning changing its underlying conditions. Getting young people and the various partners involved (municipalities, schools, CLSCs (local community service centres), community and government groups) is essential for the implementation of measures aiming to reduce the consequences of poverty on the future of young people. Society must therefore work toward the constant improvement of living conditions necessary to maintain and develop health and well-being, and ensure accessibility to public services.

The approaches taken must ensure that any action aimed at young people, especially 16-18 year olds, is ongoing. The more the various bodies involved in prevention work together, the more coherent the action. It is also important to

ensure that information is available in all communities so that young people can benefit from all the activities, measures and services available to them.

To offer young people an equal chance in their development, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Reinforce and increase the number of local initiatives designed to improve the living conditions of young people (food, clothing, housing, transport, recreation, etc.);
- Encourage physical activity and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle;
- Reduce the impact of risk factors associated with poverty by:
  - improving the conditions under which guidance and human support, which are essential to the development of young people, are provided,
  - giving priority to preventive social services and intervening prior to the onset of problems (illiteracy, drug addiction, tobacco addiction, dropping out of school and society, etc.),
  - intensifying counselling activities and the follow-up of youth worker interventions;
- Ensure ongoing support, guidance and supervisory services for young people, particularly for 16-18 year olds;
- Provide information, both accessible and adapted to young people, using energetic and innovative means, on what government programs are available and where to find social workers and services.

Line of action 2: The importance of young families and support for parents

Parents are the principal people responsible for their children. The family unit gives young people the first resources they will need to develop on a personal level and to learn to live in society.

The social and economic players must be made aware of the wide range of realities facing today's families. Young families need to be able to find in their communities conditions which help them feel fulfilled. They should benefit from a good quality of life, economic security and services adapted to their needs. In this perspective, it is important to meet the specific needs of young families. Young parents, especially those in difficulty or from underprivileged areas, must have access to support and guidance in order for them to exercise their role fully.

To support young families and recognize the importance of the role of parents, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Establish economic and tax policies which contribute to a better quality of life for young families;
- Adapt services and programs to the needs and realities of young families, particularly concerning access to daycare;

- Encourage support for and the setting up of community mutual aid and information centres adapted to family needs;

- Promote the setting up of activities to identify young parents at risk, and focus on support and prevention, in particular with regard to teenaged parents and single-parent families.

Line of action 3: Partnership between schools and communities to help young people thrive

Both school authorities and local and regional communities must attempt to make school an interesting and stimulating environment. The tendency to drop out of school, especially by young boys, needs to be dealt with by a concerted effort on the part of communities. An effort must be made by all those involved to stimulate a love of learning and offer young people learning conditions which meet their needs and expectations.

Québec has an accessible and quality education system, and has set itself the objective of educating all young people and providing them with social and working skills. With this in mind, the educational environment must offer young people the learning conditions which best meet their aspirations and potential. New ways of qualifying young people need to be put in place to meet the needs of those who have difficulty taking the traditional path and end up foregoing school and any other institutional approach.

Young people need to find familiar means of expression in school—in art, or sports for instance—and pedagogical strategies need to be inventive. Education must also provide young people with concrete opportunities to exercise their citizenship, notably through acquiring a healthy lifestyle, good consumer habits and sensible use of their free time, or through awareness of the need to protect the environment, and the establishment of equality in relationships.

To ensure young people achieve their full potential, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Make school a stimulating environment and a privileged place for offering a host of opportunities for exercising citizenship, namely through extracurricular activities;

- Stimulate, support and reinforce collaboration between educational institutions, parents, and other local partners for the success, qualification and well-being of all young people;

- Support young people in their schooling through:
  - access to a greater diversity of training programs,
  - means to help students advance from one level of education to the next,
  - guidance counselling services adapted to their needs;

- Reinforce actions to stop young people from dropping out of school, such as prevention, support, supervision, and follow-ups by special resources in the school or community;

- Give more recognition to the alternatives that community organizations offer troubled youth;
- Recognize the contribution of schools providing particular options (sports-study programs, arts-study programs, etc.).

Line of action 4: Recreation, sports and volunteer work as complementary paths to development

Participating in sports and recreational activities (arts, culture, outdoor activities, tourism, and scientific activities) contributes to increasing self-esteem, and provides numerous opportunities for getting involved. These activities help to develop a sense of effort and a desire to succeed, while promoting a healthy lifestyle which is beneficial to both physical and mental health. They also help to prevent or avoid social dropping out and break the isolation in which certain young people with particular difficulties find themselves.

Volunteer work makes young people aware of their social responsibility and not only enables them to make good use of their talents, but to develop skills while being further involved in the community. Using their spare time this way fosters a sense of commitment in young people and exercises their citizenship. It should therefore be developed and supported.

To develop and support recreational activities, sports and volunteer work as complementary paths in development, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Promote their practice so that young people are able to choose meaningful activities for their spare time, which contribute to their development, particularly in underprivileged areas;
- Develop ways for recognizing the knowledge and skills acquired through participation in extracurricular and out-of-school activities, such as cultural and scientific recreational activities, sports and volunteer work.

Line of action 5: A personalized and concerted approach to prevention and healing

Certain difficulties experienced by young people can hinder the development of their full potential. It is therefore important to pursue strategies that not only meet pressing needs, but also change the living conditions of young people so these difficulties can be avoided.

Each young person is important to their community, and efforts must be made to ensure that no one is excluded. However, reports concerning school and social dropouts, suicide, drug addiction, psychological distress, homelessness, dependency and violence demand that more efficient intervention be provided. Potential problem-causing situations need to be detected as early as possible so that a personalized, preventive and healing approach be undertaken.

The quality of help given to young people who have psychosocial problems depends, for the most part, on the presence of well-organized local and regional players who can provide the proper guidance and support. Ongoing, coherent and joint action is essential to ensuring that those requiring assistance will receive it. Teenagers should have access to special support focused on prevention. Furthermore, the approach and practices of community groups, and consistency in messages aimed at young people are also important factors in the battle against psychosocial problems.

To promote a personalized and concerted approach to prevention and healing for young people at risk, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Develop accessible and integrated front-line services which provide young people at risk with prompter protection and support, and flexible personalized services that are more in line with those offered by other community partners;
- Fight against the phenomena of psychological distress and suicide among young people;
- Promote and support the reinforcement of community resources available to young people, in particular those which provide screening services and foster care;
- Bring local and regional authorities together to define objectives and means, and to be able to better intervene;
- Ensure that the actions of government departments and agencies toward young people are complementary, through greater cooperation in establishing national objectives, and through a better coordination of programs;
- Encourage community organizations and their partners to introduce local cooperative mechanisms aimed at better coordinating their actions and following up their interventions.

Third Orientation:
Facilitating access to the job market and improving the quality of working life

Finding their place on the job market is without a doubt one of the greatest challenges now facing young people. Although this is not a new phenomenon, in today's world, where globalization, instability and job uncertainty are commonplace, it is an even greater challenge than before. Work provides a concrete means of exercising one's citizenship, since it leads to greater autonomy and fosters the creation of networks where people can get involved and feel they belong.

It is true that a number of young people enter the job market without any difficulty, but many hold non-standard jobs (part-time, temporary, self-employed). A situation such as this is bound to have consequences. For instance, because of ongoing job uncertainty, some young people hesitate before undertaking long-term projects, such as starting a family. This is even more difficult since they often have to juggle unpredictable work schedules with continuing education requirements. In such a context, reconciling family and studies becomes a complicated balancing act.

To facilitate access to job markets and improve the quality of working life, concerted strategies are essential and must be based on action taken along the following four lines of action: preparation for a working life, job access and retention, work-related conditions, reconciliation of family life with school and work.

Line of action 1: Preparation for a working life

Acquiring a good general education and vocational, technical or university training geared toward the job market is more than ever a prerequisite for a successful career. Whether this training paves the way to a job in a high-tech sector or in a more traditional one, it must be of high quality and be accompanied with activities that provide insight into the current labour market.

Despite progress in terms of academic achievement, too many young people still finish their education without having the basic skills they need to enter the job market. It is imperative that these young people, upon leaving school, be able to benefit from the services they need. Some young people who experience difficulties along traditional paths may be able to acquire the skills and know-how they need for the job market through alternate training paths.

In addition, many are unaware of the array of vocational and training programs available, the working conditions awaiting graduates and the harmonization of programs between vocational and technical training, and between technical and university training. Others have trouble getting into the right program, either because there is not enough room or because of the limited choice of programs in the region where they live.

To provide young people with the training they need to qualify them for the job market, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Increase the number of registrations in vocational and technical programs:
  - by providing better information on available training programs and job prospects,
  - by giving wider recognition to these training programs in the eyes of the public,
  - by more fully acknowledging academic background and extracurricular achievement,
  - by providing better information on the harmonization of programs, namely between vocational training and technical training, and between technical training and university training;
- Ensure access to vocational training programs, namely by developing customized training programs and short programs, and by the interregional mobility of young people;
- Involve educational, workplace and community resources to:
  - foster concerted action in terms of services for young dropouts,
  - increase access to a wider range of training paths, both within and beyond the educational system;
- Maintain high calibre university training.

Familiarization with the job market first starts with a good knowledge of the types of jobs available and the training programs offered. Access to top-quality, well-adapted guidance counselling services must go hand in hand with opportunities to actively participate in the job market. Summer jobs or work-study training programs provide one such opportunity. These paths—already successfully explored—must be made available to the greatest possible number of young people.

On-the-job training is another effective way of acquiring work-related experience. In Québec, the concept of trainees in the workplace is not deeply rooted in corporate culture, even though many of the students registered in vocational, technical and university training programs have access to it. Further progress in this area is required, particularly in sectors where such access is more limited.

School-to-work transition programs should be more accessible, particularly for young graduates who have trouble entering the workplace. It is important however to make a distinction between these measures and on-the-job training. On-the-job training, on the one hand, helps people acquire specific knowledge and skills, which are recognized and transferable, and related to their course of studies. This type of training requires special supervision that must be ensured by the learning establishment in conjunction with the host company. School-to-work measures, on the other hand, aim specifically at helping people acquire basic and personal skills.

Access to on-the-job training, or to school-to-work transition measures, depends not only on the willingness of companies to invest in training a new generation of workers, but also on how well government and agencies coordinate these

activities with businesses. A new tradition of business-based training, either in the form of on-the-job training or school-to-work transition measures, must stem from a true desire to invest in upcoming generations and not from the perspective of finding cheap labour. These activities must come with fair and reasonable remuneration.

The support of public services and of community workers is vital to help young people in their quest for self-sufficiency and their arrival on the job market. It is important that a range of opportunities be available and that the measures offered correspond to young people's real life expectations. Measures that are diverse and interesting will incite greater participation, especially among clienteles that are more subject to extended periods of unemployment.

To become better acquainted with the job market and to facilitate school-to-work transition, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Establish, with partners, a true tradition of business-based training to increase the number of available spaces for young people who want on-the-job training, and to ensure its quality;
- Work in conjunction with partners to increase the number of spaces available for young people who want to participate in school-to-work measures;
- Provide a greater number of young people with access to measures that help them acquire work experience, such as summer jobs or job experience during the school year or after graduation, particularly for young graduates who have trouble entering the job market;
- Enable all young people to have access to employment and guidance services tailored to their job-search needs, including concentrated services and job banks, provided by government departments or agencies, or by community-based agencies.
- Ensure that the opportunities provided to young people for entering the job market are diverse and of quality.

Line of action 2: Job access and retention

Access to employment is based on society's capacity to create a sufficient number of jobs, the goal of any comprehensive economic development policy. It is also based on the willingness of companies and unions to bring young people into the their businesses in a just and fair way.

All sectors of activity must invest in the next generation of workers if they are to continue to develop over the medium and long term. They must also be able to rely on a pool of skilled workers. A number of sectors, both traditional and new, offer good job prospects, readily available to young people. However, because of market instability or the type of jobs offered, workers in some of the sectors must, more than others, deal with greater uncertainty.

To facilitate access to employment, the strategies to be pursued must, in conjunction with partners, aim to:

- Increase job stability for young people and support initiatives designed to help them enter the job market on a long-term basis;
- Make companies and unions more aware of the need to integrate young people into the workplace;
- Implement employment assistance programs and locally based initiatives that would be available to young people who wish to develop new skills and abilities.

Entrepreneurship, either on an individual or collective basis, is one of the driving forces of the economy. Development of the entrepreneurial spirit, which means the desire to take risks and innovate, must be encouraged. In addition to fostering the creation of businesses or jobs, it contributes to instilling in workers the attitudes they need and helps existing businesses grow. This option must therefore be among the choices offered to young people when they are deciding which career path to follow. However, not everyone has what it takes to be an entrepreneur. It is important to ensure that young people have the desire and the aptitudes required before embarking on this path. Also, young entrepreneurs must be able to count on effective assistance and support measures to get their new businesses off the ground and firmly established.

To foster youth entrepreneurship, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Promote and facilitate the individual, collective and cooperative entrepreneurship of teens and young adults, by introducing them to these types of business approaches during their school years;
- Offer a greater number of young people the chance to experience the various types of entrepreneurship, whether individual, collective or cooperative;
- Provide more support to young entrepreneurs in starting and expanding their business so as to increase the success rate, namely by supporting business incubators and by sponsorship;
- Initiate young entrepreneurs into the international business world by encouraging them to establish international business ties.

In a context where changes are occurring at an accelerated rate, continuing education has become indispensable for workers who want to maintain, or even further upgrade their skills. In addition, all young and self-employed workers must have access to ongoing training and receive the proper recognition for the knowledge acquired and skills developed. The availability of training programs that are flexible and in sufficient supply not only concerns workers, but also employers who must be able to count on a skilled labour force.

To ensure access to continuing education and to recognize the knowledge and skills acquired by all workers, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Make the various players in the business world aware of the importance of continuing education;
- Have more flexible school/training course formats and ensure the development of and access to programs adapted to the needs of young workers in various sectors of activity;
- Implement, with partners from the job market, additional mechanisms for recognizing abilities developed and school-acquired skills, especially in the workplace or abroad.

Line of action 3: Employment-related conditions

Labour laws establish some of the rules related to wages and employment status and impose complaint and recourse mechanisms to protect against abuses. However, changes in the job market have led to work-related situations not covered by the law, such as non-standard forms of work. In some cases, the door has been left open to certain kinds of discrimination. The people who hold these jobs may be deprived of certain recourses and protection. For solidarity purposes, rules must be better adapted to the realities of today's job market.

For instance, private insurance plans and employee benefits—offering coverage beyond what is provided by the social security net—are generally designed for those having stable jobs. In today's world, where an increasing number of people need to hold down more than one job or are frequently changing jobs, the need to adapt these plans is more than ever apparent. This issue concerns several public and private sector players, namely employers, unions and financial institutions.

To promote equality for young workers, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Familiarize young people and parents of young workers with labour laws;
- Ensure that laws and institutions are properly adapted to new job market realities to avoid inequities among young workers and students and to better protect them;
- Enable young workers who hold non-standard jobs to benefit from private and public group insurance and social protection plans adapted to their needs and to the realities of today's job market;
- Develop, with job-market partners, unions and employers, strategies aimed at reducing job uncertainty.

Line of action 4: Reconciliation of family life with school and work

Reconciling family and work, and family and school, is neither a new issue nor one that affects only young people. It is, however, one of their foremost concerns.

It is well known that striking a balance between family life and other structured activities, such as school or work, is especially difficult when the children are very young. In this area, it is often women who shoulder much of the responsibility. Reconciling family life and a career is even more complicated in today's workplace. It is therefore important to ensure that the offer of employment corresponds to the needs of families and that a renewed vision be adopted to reconcile family life and school or work. The responsibility of making this conciliation possible must be shared and assumed by all.

The government contributes to supporting parents who pursue an education or work, by implementing low-cost daycare services and by adapting its programs to the realities of today's families. It is also looking into giving Québec its own parental insurance plan, which would be more easily available to part-time, temporary and self-employed workers. The workplace must also play its part in supporting parents who have a job, and can do so in various ways. People too often forget that employers and employees depend upon one another for their respective survival and prosperity. Currently, these support initiatives are mostly from large, public and unionized bodies.

To help reconcile family life with school and work, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Inform, make aware and mobilize all players of the need to introduce measures that will help conciliate family and work, and family and school, whether these players be working parents or students, or people from work-related, educational, health or municipal sectors;

- Create, maintain and improve a Québec parental insurance plan tailored to the needs of families and accessible to all workers, in particular those who have non-standard jobs, such as self-employed workers;

- Ensure the harmonization of services offered, the various forms of work and the daycare needs of parents.

Forth Orientation: Developing a sense of belonging

The sense that young people have of belonging to a community—whether a family, association, group, municipality, region or nation—is crucial if they are to fully take part in it. The deeper this sense of belonging, the more connected the members of a society feel and the tighter the social bonds.

Certain conditions are conducive to this sense of belonging. Young people must find a place in their different communities, be listened to, have the opportunity to pursue projects and get involved. They also require an environment that best meets their needs, expectations and capacity to get involved.

A sense of belonging makes young people firmly believe that they have interests in common and things to share. It is crucial that young people play an active part in building Québec, regardless of the region in which they live. Like older people, they need relationships with other members of society within a culture where they feel they are contributing. In a context of increasing global awareness, forming these bonds and striving for mutual exchange are also things that transcend borders. These opportunities to open up to the rest of the world often perturb the bonds that young people have with their more immediate environment and makes them question or redefine these bonds. For young people, a sense of belonging is key to their exercising full and responsible citizenship.

To foster this sense of belonging, concerted strategies are essential and must be based on actions taken along the following four lines of action: young people in an inhabited and vibrant Québec, young people active in and committed to their community, an inclusive society open to the diversity of young people and, finally young people in a Québec open to the world.

Line of action 1: Young people in an inhabited and vibrant Québec

Young people's sense of belonging takes root in their immediate surroundings, on a local and regional level. However, it is also true that certain young people cannot find the means to develop or be fulfilled in their place of origin because they feel the need to broaden their horizons. The exodus of young people from some of Québec's regions can have as critical an effect on those who stay in the region as on those who leave. When young people leave their region of origin, it has a detrimental effect on the community's vitality and also undermines the motivation of those young people who decide to stay. Furthermore, young people who leave their regions in search of new life experiences or to study or work, are more prone to feeling isolated than if they were closer to their family and social circles. Cities are struggling with several problems, such as homelessness, street gangs and prostitution, amplified because of the urban setting, while having to make young people from other regions or parts of the world feel welcome and safe.

Mobility of young people is not a problem per se. It is actually necessary if they want to experience new things, lifestyles, workplaces or educational settings.

However, when young people leave their region or do not return because of lack of interest or opportunities for personal growth, there is cause for concern.

It is vital to emphasize the value of living in outlying regions and to offer young people surrounding in which they can find fulfilment. Regional partners must ensure that young people benefit from such surroundings, which will motivate them to put down roots and become active members in those regions. Young people's contribution to the development of their region must be recognized and encouraged. Finally, true inter-regional mobility will only be possible if Québec's different regions become better known, better promoted and more stimulating environments for young people.

To ensure a more stimulating environment for young people, throughout Québec's regions, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Improve the living conditions of young people in outlying regions, namely by providing increased access to community-based services;
- Support projects designed by and carried out by young people, which are beneficial to their community and surroundings;
- Encourage young people to remain in or return to outlying regions by increasing job opportunities, supporting individual, collective and cooperative entrepreneurship, and providing further information on accessibility to employment;
- Increase initiatives enabling intra-and inter-regional exchange and sharing, especially through cultural and sporting events;
- Develop mechanisms for integrating young people who decide to settle in the urban centres of Québec's various regions;
- Encourage young people to be open and learn about the specific character of Québec's regions.

Line of action 2: Young people active in and committed to their community

The willingness of young people to get involved in their community is genuine and warrants support. Regardless of the ways they choose to participate—through community, sporting, social, economic, cultural, recreational or political activities—young people must have the opportunity to assert themselves and express their creativity within their communities.

Young people must become full-fledged players in projects that will give them the opportunity to assume responsibilities and feel useful. It is essential that young people be actively involved in community-based projects so they can form bonds and create networks. The types of participation must be established according to the age of the young people and the specific situations in which some find themselves excluded. Furthermore, it is necessary to provide young people with

better access to facilities and equipment that will encourage their participation and meet their needs.

To encourage the social inclusiveness of young people in all ways, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Recognize and encourage various ways of getting young people to participate and get involved so as to improve the environment in which they live;
- Support young people in helping them to be responsible citizens and encourage them to play an active part in the democratic life of their community;
- Focus on culture, leisure, sports and community development as tools that get young people involved in society;
- Provide increased access to various collective facilities and services that meet the needs expressed by young people;
- Develop new collective services, especially for youth in underprivileged regions or neighbourhoods.

Line of action 3: An inclusive society open to the diversity of young people

Québec society is culturally diverse and there is every reason to believe that it will be even more so in coming years. Already cultures and lifestyles exist side-by-side, with some established a long time ago, others in more recent years. These different cultures have constantly enriched Québec. To benefit from the contribution of all these components of Québec society and to help foster contacts among the various communities, including the ethnocultural and linguistic communities and the peoples of the First Nations, openness to a pluralistic society is more than ever a necessity. It is crucial that ongoing support be provided to the fostering of harmonious relations among individuals and communities that make up Québec's society. This openness to diversity must come across in day-to-day behaviour that reflects principles of equality, especially toward those experiencing specific integration problems.

However, this inevitable intermingling of cultures presupposes that Québec's fundamental values are known, accepted and reinforced. Values, such as democracy, solidarity, fairness, social justice and openness to diversity, and realities, such as the French language and multiculturalism, are the very essence of Québec society. These values and realities are essential and must be clearly recognized and expressed. They define an inclusive society that embraces all young people, regardless of their origin, sex, culture or the region in which they live.

To foster openness to cultural plurality and to the diversity of young people, while respecting Québec's specific character, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Make society aware of the diversity of young people and the realities they face, namely by facilitating dialogue and opportunities for exchange;
- Support individuals and groups facing discrimination by adapting existing resources and activities to their needs;
- Further the knowledge of history, Québec heritage and common civic values, namely that of being open to diversity, by using information dissemination means adapted to the needs of young people;
- Ensure the knowledge and use of French as the official and common language of Québec;
- Set up activities that will enable young Quebecers with different cultural backgrounds to get together and learn more about each other;
- Combat all forms of racism and discrimination.

Line of action 4: Young people in a Québec open to the world

Even though young people's identity is essentially shaped within their community, contact with international realities also helps them develop their sense of belonging to their community. By opening up to the outside world, young people become more aware of their own Québec identity. They build relationships that contribute to the fostering of international solidarity and of values such as democracy, tolerance, the defence of rights and liberties, and cultural diversity. This openness often translates into an interest in learning various languages and an increased involvement in international debates and events.

Compared to previous generations, today's youth has, without a doubt, been more exposed to philosophies and cultures flowing ever more freely through new communication channels. Consequently, very early on in life, young people must develop critical judgement in the face of all the information received, and establish their place in an increasingly diverse society.

Openness to others, through contact with other ways of thinking and lifestyles, makes it possible for young people to develop a true and dynamic identity that will continue to grow. An attachment to their own culture and an openness to the world, which in turn enriches this culture, are key to a vibrant Québec culture which extends its influence at home and abroad.

To enable young people to be open to various international realities, the strategies to be pursued must aim to:

- Offer young people awareness and training tools that will enable them to better grasp international issues, including that of Québec's place in the world;
- Promote the learning of languages;
- Put more emphasis on international cooperation and exchange measures that are accessible to young people, especially those within the French-speaking world;
- Support the holding, in Québec, of international events focusing on education, sports and culture, as well as the participation of young people in similar types of events abroad.

Conclusion

The Québec youth policy proposed by the government aims at having each young person feel and act like an active citizen in Québec society. All young people must be able to find their place based on their aspirations and potential. Young people must play their part as a driving force behind a vibrant and renewed Québec society. This requires that everyone, young and old alike, be open to differences, believe that each person can and must contribute to the development of society and that everyone show solidarity when it comes to the ongoing and harmonious development of Québec.

The Québec youth policy proposes orientations that will serve as a frame of reference for all partners in their actions for young people. These orientations were chosen and defined following public consultations and in close cooperation with young people. Their implementation can only be possible if everyone's actions pull in the same direction. The government, regions, municipalities, communities, individuals, families, educational institutions, unions, businesses, community-based organizations and associations, the media and all young people themselves, need to rally around this social project so important for the future of Québec: a strong and committed youth.

Through the various levers aimed at implementing the policy, the government's actions will be geared toward supporting efforts, reinforcing concerted action with young people and bringing together players from Québec's various communities. Furthermore, the action plans stemming from the Québec youth policy will be updated every three years so that its orientations remain in tune with the changing reality of young people and society.

Young people are the future of Québec. This means that each person is partly responsible for making Québec and its youth an indivisible, dynamic and progressive whole, in the image of our shared values and in keeping with our aspirations as citizens of Québec.

The implementation of the Québec Youth Policy

Levers for implementing and following up the Québec youth policy

The Québec youth policy is a frame of reference that must inspire the decisions of all interested parties and serve to coordinate youth-related government action.

Through flexible implementation, the policy will be able to meet the various needs of young people and adapt to their changing condition. This flexibility will notably be made possible by action plans to be updated every three years, thus keeping the policy viable as time goes on.

Implementation of the Québec youth policy will have two major objectives:

- to **coordinate government action** on youth-related issues;
- to permanently introduce a **youth vision** into government action and into the actions of all partners of the civil society.

A certain number of mechanisms are being put into place as levers for implementing the Québec youth policy. These mechanisms will, first of all, support government coordination. They will sustain consensus building with organizations that together represent all young people. Finally, they will promote coherent youth-oriented action on the part of national, regional and local partners.

Better coordination of government action

The Québec youth policy will be implemented mainly through government departments and agencies. At both the political and administrative levels, implementation will be harmonized with existing policies and programs that, to varying degrees, serve young people.

The policy will also serve to impart a youth dimension into the very design of government policies and programs. Action will be needed at earlier stages of government activities before the decisions have been made.

Coordination at the political level

The Québec youth policy presents a long-term vision, one that will require continuity in action and a high degree of coordination. Consequently, the youth policy will remain **under the authority of the prime minister**, who will be supported by a **minister responsible for youth**.

A **departmental standing committee on youth** will be created and mandated to ensure that government youth-related policies, initiatives and actions are coherent.

Departmental committees, made up of ministers whose responsibilities include the various issues addressed by the committees, currently:

- ensure that the sector-based policies and initiatives are consistent with the priorities and strategies of the priorities committee; and
- ensure that government actions show interdepartmental and intersectorial consistency in areas under the jurisdiction of each department.

Finally, follow-up of the Québec youth policy at the political level will be enhanced by introducing a **youth impact clause** into position papers to the Conseil des ministres, with respect to matters having a major impact on young people. This section will indicate whether the measures being proposed have any impact on today's or tomorrow's young people.

Secrétariat à la jeunesse: central to harmonizing government action

The **Secrétariat à la jeunesse** (SAJ) is the key government body for youth issues. Its main mission will be to ensure coordinated and coherent youth-related government action, in line with the Québec youth policy, and at each stage of implementation.

To fulfil its mission, the Secrétariat à la jeunesse will remain under the authority of the minister responsible for youth and be overseen by a government administrator. Furthermore, its mandates, resources and powers will be extended, notably by including the duties of the Secretariat of the Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse and the follow-up duties for commitments made at the Summit, including follow-up of the Fonds Jeunesse Québec.

The **mandates** of the Secrétariat à la jeunesse will comprise the six following components:

- **Youth-related government action**

  The SAJ will notably coordinate and organize an interdepartmental committee whose task will be to ensure that the government acts consistently when implementing the Québec youth policy and preparing the action plan.

- **Relations and concerted action with partners from different sectors**

  Among other responsibilities, the SAJ will maintain ongoing relations and work in conjunction with young people and partners from various sectors.

- **Follow up to the Québec youth policy and preparation of the action plan**

  The SAJ will follow up and assess departmental and agency youth actions in accordance with the Québec youth policy orientations. It will prepare the action plan in conjunction with the departments and agencies concerned and with the follow-up committee for the Québec youth policy, for which it will act as the executive secretary.

- **Research, accessibility to, and coordination of the activities regarding the monitoring of youth issues**

  The SAJ will team up with various partners and ensure that genuine expertise on youth develops within the government and is made available to interested

parties. It will also assess the effects of government measures on young people.

- **Funding for youth-related action**

  The SAJ will see to the providing of core funding to regional youth forums and the funding of joint policy-oriented action by departments, agencies and partners.

- **Facilitating communications**

  The SAJ will disseminate information to young people, youth workers and the general public, concerning the different stages and achievements surrounding policy implementation within departments and agencies.

Interdepartmental coordination

Assistant deputy ministers will sit on an interdepartmental committee, to be organized by the Secrétariat à la jeunesse and entrusted with preparing and following up the action plan. In addition, interdepartmental coordination will be provided:

- by a committee bringing together each department's representatives on youth issues;
- by integrating a concern for youth issues into the departments' strategic plans;
- by developing a youth component within the framework agreements between the government and the regions.

The Secrétariat à la jeunesse will provide support for each of these mechanisms, when necessary, and will see to the sharing of information.

A youth vision in government action and in the action of all civil society partners

To bring a youth dimension into the workings of government and society on a lasting basis, concerted action is required among young people themselves and with young people on national, regional and local levels. A better understanding of their day-to-day lives is also necessary.

Follow-up committee for the Québec youth policy

The key mechanism for ensuring youth-related concerted action will take the form of a follow-up committee for the Québec youth policy. It will take over the mandates of the follow-up committee of the Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse. It will be made up exclusively of young people and will have the regional youth forums represented on it.

Mandates of the follow-up committee for the Québec youth policy:

- follow-up implementation of the Québec youth policy and the Summit's points of consensus;

- advise the minister responsible for youth on action priorities related to the Québec youth policy orientations;
- assist in defining action plan objectives and performance indicators;
- mobilize the different partners and make them aware of their role in reaching the objectives of the Québec youth policy.

Conseil permanent de la jeunesse

The Conseil permanent de la jeunesse (CPJ) is the only government agency run by young people. For the government, it is an important liaison in efforts to build consensus with young people. As a result, the Conseil permanent de la jeunesse will continue with its current mandate and will be invited to participate in the Québec youth policy follow-up committee.

Current mandates of the Conseil permanent de la jeunesse:

- to advise the minister responsible for youth on youth-related issues, namely in developing solidarity between generations, encouraging openness to pluralism and fostering intercultural bridge-building;
- to formulate opinions for the minister, carry out or have others carry out studies and research it deems necessary for the exercise of its duties, seek opinions or receive requests from people and groups on youth issues, provide the public with information on any question relating to youth needs and interests and, finally, set up special committees;
- to give its opinion on any matter that the minister submits to it, from the standpoint of young people's interests;
- to carry out or have others carry out studies and research that the minister has requested.

Regional youth forums

When it set up the regional youth forums further to the *Québec Government Action Plan for Youth 1998-2001*, the government created an important lever for building consensus among young people in the regions. The Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse saw these bodies assume a major role in preparation for the Summit and in efforts to truly rally young people from all regions to this cause.

The mandates of the regional youth forums will be strengthened at the regional and national levels. Core funding will be provided directly by the Secrétariat à la jeunesse under agreements with the regional development councils and the youth forums themselves.

Mandates of the regional youth forums:

- to build consensus between local and regional youth stakeholders in order to ensure consistency and to maximize the effect of their actions;

- to help young people become represented on the main local, regional, and Québec bodies that are associated with youth;
- to assume an advisory role with the regional development council and other development agencies on regional youth issues, notably in relation to regional strategies and strategies that have an impact on young people;
- to help mobilize young people in all regions with regards to the Québec youth policy;
- to help manage the Fonds Jeunesse Québec.

Understanding young people today and tomorrow

> "There are no places here, like just about anywhere else, that have the task of finding out what is going on with young people in the world and producing knowledge for the purpose of providing a better perspective on what is happening with contemporary youth. [...] As a result, an important period of life eludes us in several of its dimensions." [5] [free translation]

If the Québec youth policy is to be continually adapted to the changes in young people and society, decision makers will need access to information that can enable them to better understand the different realities of young people and detect, through the younger generation, the major trends that are sure to mark the Québec culture and identity of tomorrow.

The Secrétariat à la jeunesse, together with various partners, particularly the Observatoire Jeunes et Société of the INRS-UCS and the Institut de la statistique du Québec, will see to the creation of a forum of ideas where research findings, information, and data from individual researchers, groups, and various bodies will be pooled and widely disseminated.

5. Observatoire Jeunes et Société, in association with *Le Devoir*. *Être jeune en l'an 2000*, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000, pp. 125-126.

Appendix 1
Member organizations of the Québec Youth Policy Advisory Committee

Member organizations of the Québec Youth Policy Advisory Committee

- Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador
- Association des centres locaux de développement du Québec
- Association étudiante du secondaire de la Commission scolaire de Montréal (AESCSDM)
- Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI)
- Centre génération emploi
- Coalition des organismes communautaires pour le développement de la main-d'œuvre
- CAMO pour personnes handicapées
- Centrale des syndicats du Québec
- Comité des jeunes de la Fédération des femmes du Québec
- Comité des jeunes de la Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec
- Comité national des jeunes de la CSN
- Concertation jeunesse
- Conseil permanent de la jeunesse
- Conseil québécois du loisir
- Environnement jeunesse
- Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec
- Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec
- Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec
- Force jeunesse
- Forum action Québec
- Forum Jeunesse Abitibi-Témiscamingue
- Forum Jeunesse Laval
- Forum Jeunesse Outaouais
- Regroupement des Jeunes Gens d'Affaires du Québec
- Regroupement des maisons de jeunes du Québec
- Regroupement Québécois des Coopérateurs et Coopératrices du Travail
- Réseau des Carrefour jeunesse-emploi du Québec
- Réseau intercollégial des activités socioculturelles du Québec

Appendix 2

Organizations having presented a position paper or brief during the national and regional public consultaion period

Organizations having presented a position paper or brief during the national and regional public consultation period

National consultation

- Agence Québec Wallonie Bruxelles pour la jeunesse
- Alliance des manufacturiers et des exportateurs du Québec
- Alliance québécoise des regroupements régionaux pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées (AQRIPH)
- Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador
- Association des centres locaux de développement du Québec
- Association des CLSC et des CHSLD du Québec
- Association étudiante du secondaire de la Commission scolaire de Montréal (AESCSDM)
- Association des intervenants en toxicomanie du Québec inc.
- Association des jeunes de la fonction publique québécoise
- Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI)
- Association québécoise d'information scolaire et professionnelle
- Centre génération emploi
- Centre Saint-Michel – Commission scolaire de la région de Sherbrooke
- City of Montréal
- Coalition des organismes communautaires pour le développement de la main-d'œuvre
- Comité aviseur-jeunes d'Emploi-Québec
- CAMO pour personnes handicapées
- Comité jeunes de la Fédération des femmes du Québec
- Comité national des jeunes du Parti québécois
- Comité national jeunes de la Confédération des syndicats nationaux
- Commission scolaire de Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup
- Concertation jeunesse
- Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec (COPHAN) Universities
- Conférence des régies régionales de la santé et des services sociaux du Québec
- Conference of Rectors and Principals of Quebec
- Conseil de la famille et de l'enfance

- Conseil de la santé et du bien-être
- Conseil de la science et de la technologie
- Conseil des relations interculturelles
- Conseil du statut de la femme
- Conseil permanent de la jeunesse
- Conseil québécois du loisir
- Conseil supérieur de l'éducation
- Environnement jeunesse
- Fédération des cégeps
- Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec
- Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec
- Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec
- Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec
- Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec
- Fédération québécoise des centres de réadaptation en déficience intellectuelle
- Force Jeunesse
- INRS-Culture et société—Observatoire Jeunes et Société
- Office des personnes handicapées du Québec
- Office franco-québécois pour la jeunesse
- Québec City
- Regroupement des Auberges du cœur
- Regroupement des Jeunes Gens d'Affaires du Québec
- Regroupement des maisons de jeunes du Québec
- Regroupement des organismes communautaires autonomes jeunesse du québec (ROCAJQ)
- Regroupement des organismes communautaires d'intervention auprès des jeunes décrocheurs scolaires potentiels ou réels de l'île de Montréal
- Regroupement Québécois des Coopérateurs et Coopératrices du Travail
- Réseau des Carrefour jeunesse-emploi du Québec
- Réseau des services spécialisés de main-d'œuvre
- Réseau intercollégial des activités socioculturelles du Québec
- Scouts du Québec
- Service de police de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal (SPCUM)
- Sports-Québec
- Syndicat des professionnelles et professionnels du gouvernement du Québec

Regional consultation

- Conseil régional de concertation et de développement du Bas-Saint-Laurent
- Conseil régional de concertation et de développement du Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean
- Conseil régional de concertation et développement de la région de Québec
- Conseil régional de développement de la Mauricie
- Conseil régional de développement de l'Estrie
- Conseil régional de développement de l'Île de Montréal
- Conseil régional de développement de l'Outaouais
- Conseil régional de développement de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue
- Conseil régional de développement de la Côte-Nord
- Conseil régional de développement de la Baie-James
- Conseil régional de concertation et de développement de la Gaspésie et des Îles-de-la-Madeleine
- Conseil régional de concertation et de développement de Chaudière-Appalaches
- Conseil régional de développement de Laval
- Conseil régional de développement de Lanaudière
- Conseil régional de développement des Laurentides
- Conseil régional de développement de la Montérégie
- Conseil régional de concertation et de développement du Centre-du-Québec
- Kativik Regional Development Council (KRDC)

The regional development council in each of the regions, in conjunction with its respective youth forum, prepared the reports and held the regional consultations.